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Schwallie et al.

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(54) **PHOTOCHEMICAL FRANGIBLE CLOSURE**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/441,985**

(22) Filed: **Nov. 17, 1999**

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **B65D 51/24**
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **215/303**; 215/253; 220/229; 141/351; 141/364
(58) **Field of Search** 215/250, 253, 215/303; 220/229, 254, 266, 277; 141/351–354, 364

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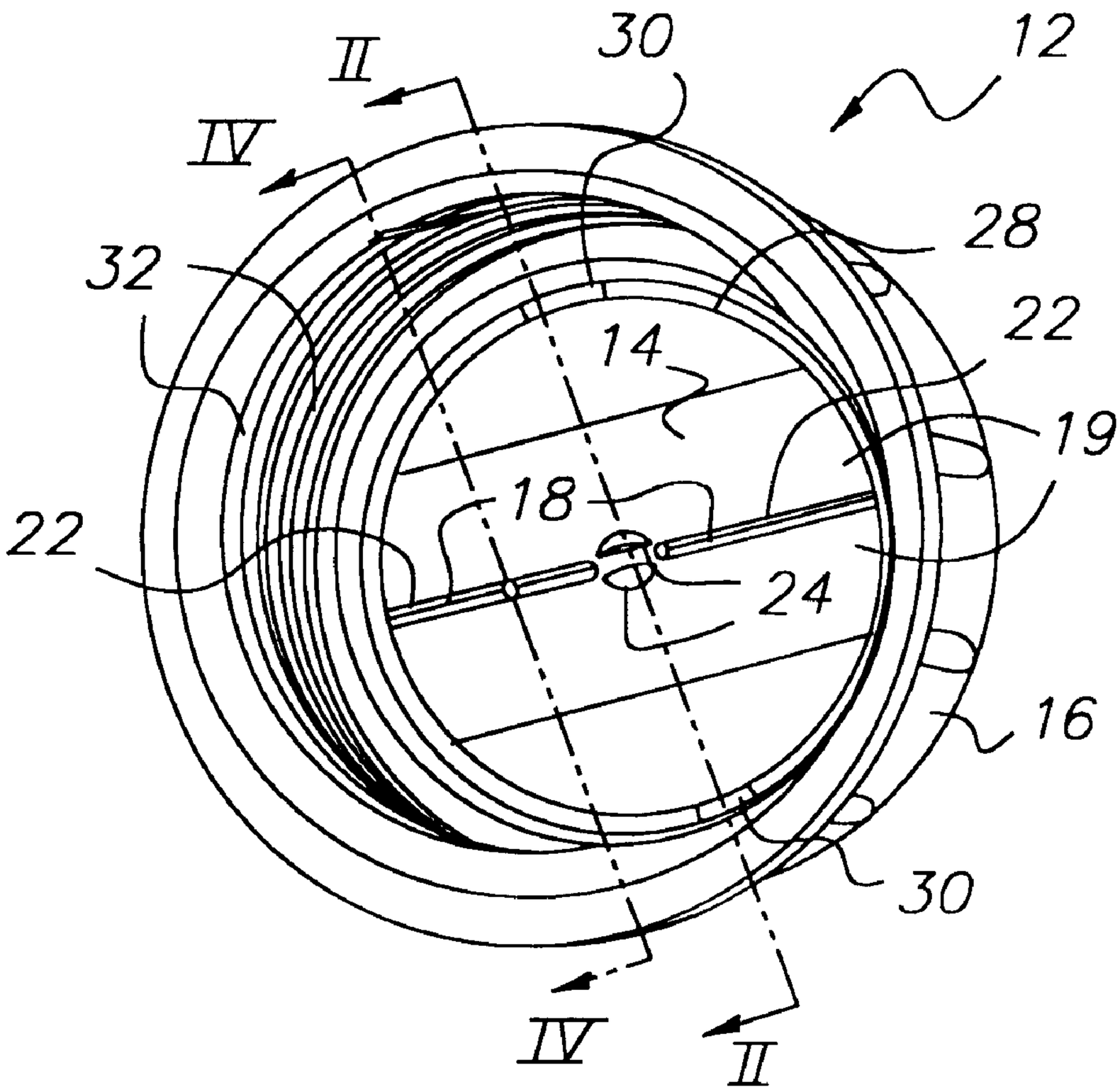
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A frangible closure has a closure sheet having a central weakness formed substantially though a medial portion. The central weakness has a thickness and a central portion of greater thickness than the thickness of the central weakness so as to resist shearing of the central weakness. A lateral skirt surrounding the closure has at least a partial radial weakness therebetween for cooperating with the central weakness and enabling the central weakness to fracture.

4 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



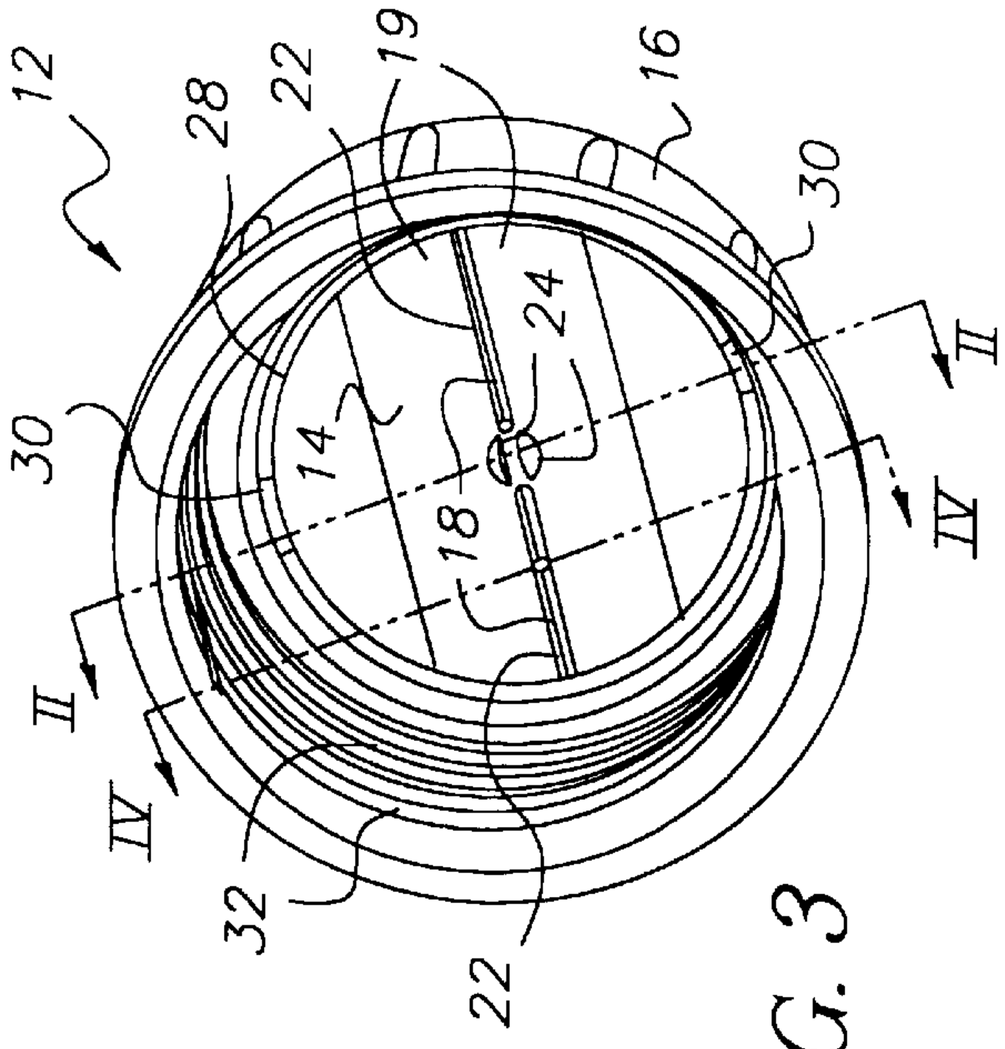


FIG. 3

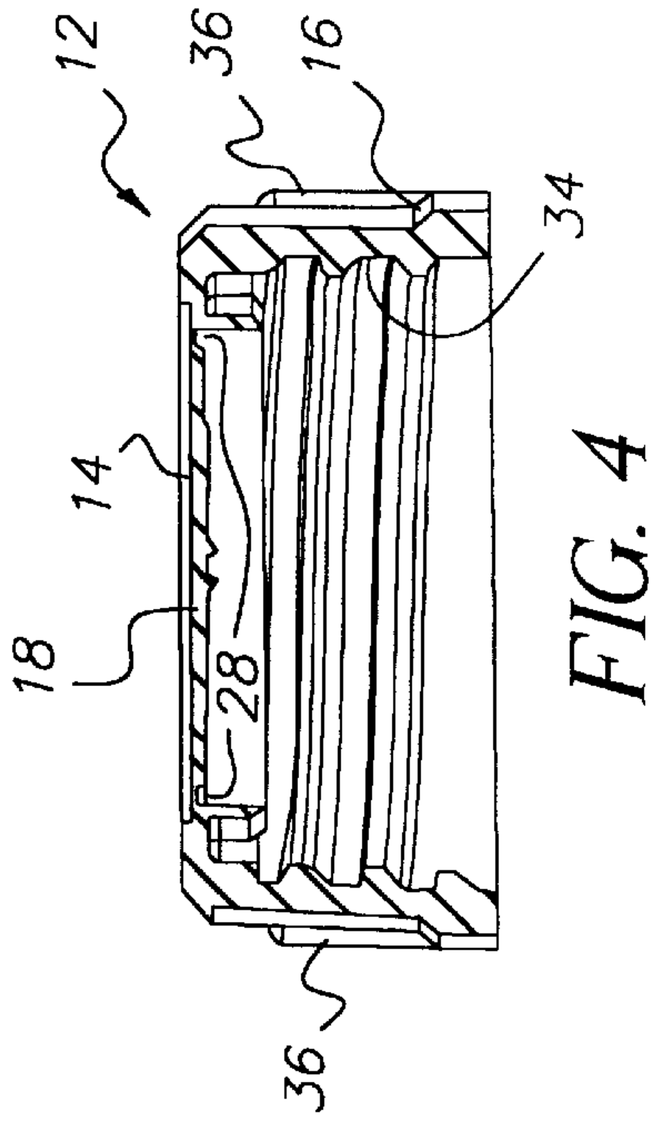


FIG. 4

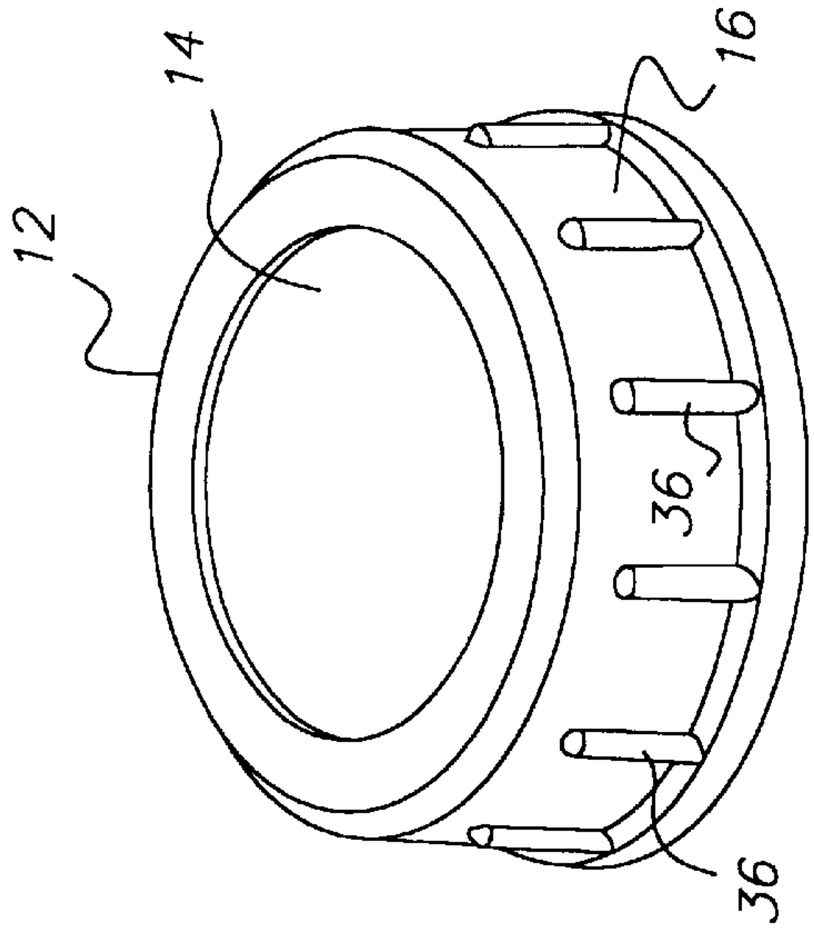


FIG. 1

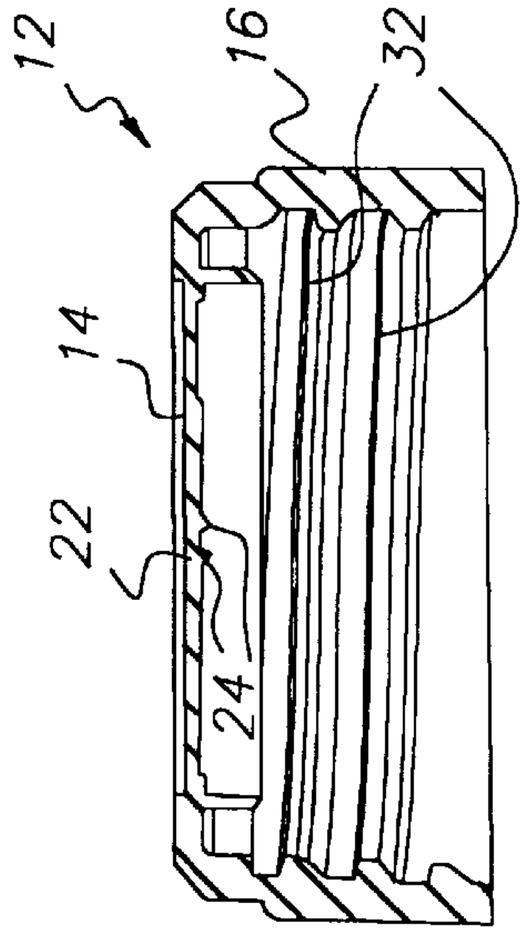


FIG. 2

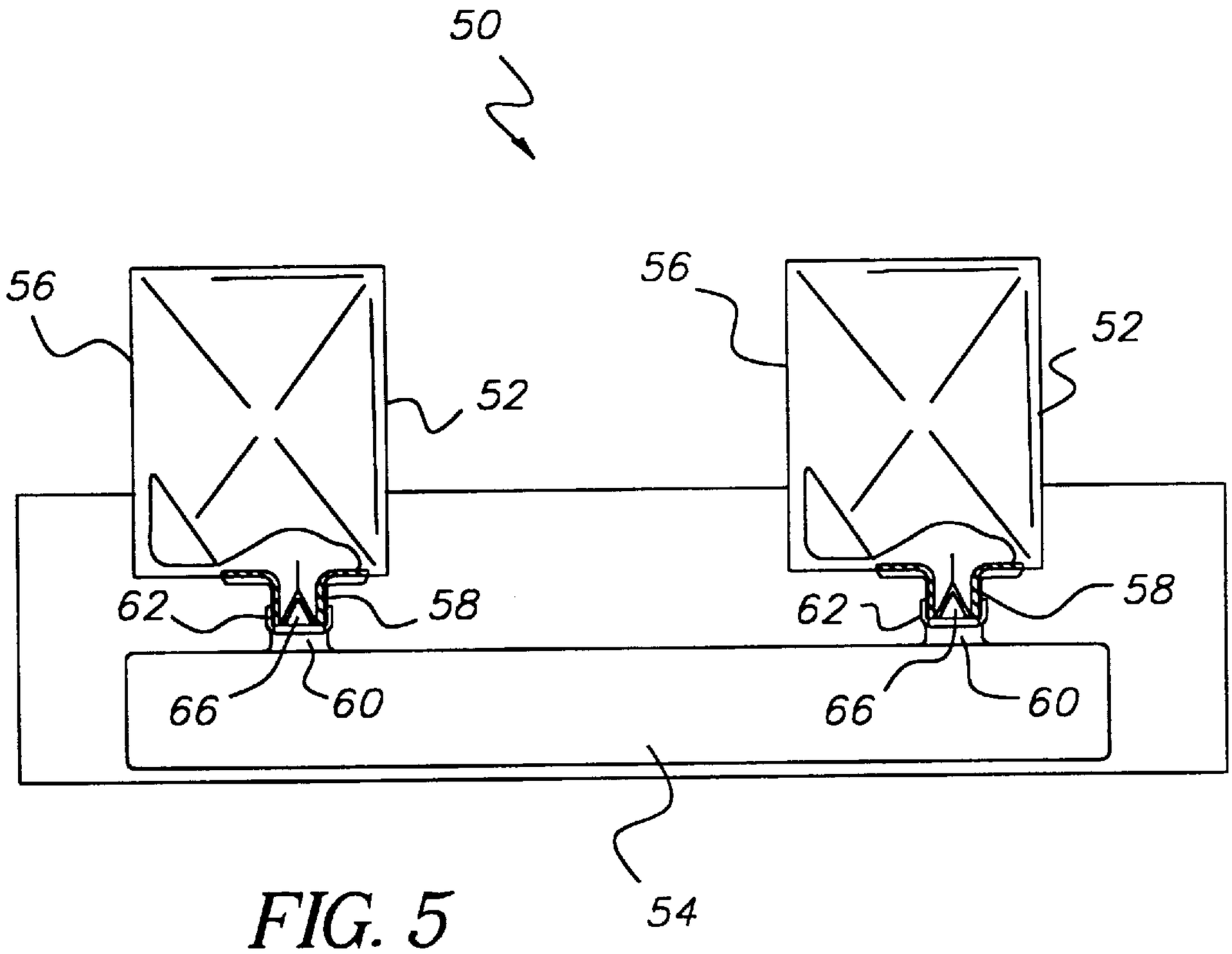


FIG. 5

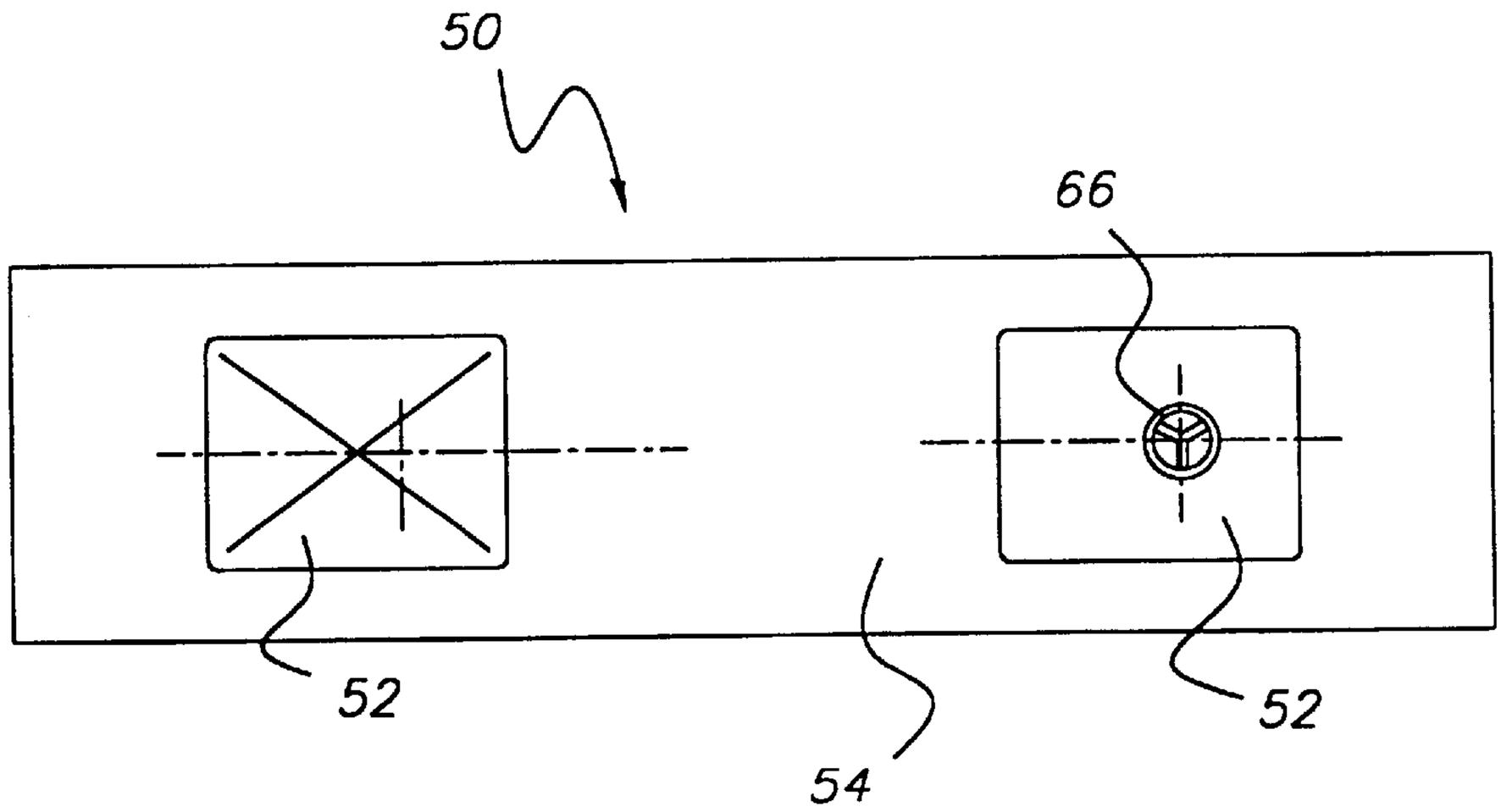


FIG. 6

PHOTOCHEMICAL FRANGIBLE CLOSURE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application is related U.S. application Ser. No. 09/441,499, filed Nov. 17, 1999, by Scott H. Schwallie, et al., and entitled, "Fluid Transfer system For Photoprocessing Materials;" and U.S. application Ser. No. 09/441, 499, filed Nov, 17, 1999, by Scott H. Schwallie, et al., and entitled, "Container For Photoprocessing Materials."

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates generally to the field of emptying containers or flasks containing specific products. More specifically, the invention relates to a frangible closure for containers or flasks containing photographic development chemicals.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Certain chemical products must, prior to their use, be specially mixed with other products of the same nature. For shelf-life reasons or product freshness it is often important for the mixing to be carried out just before use. This is particularly the case with chemical products in photographic processing. Customer requirements for easier handling of these photochemical bottles with less exposure to the chemicals has generated the need for a cap which does not need to be removed or replaced to dispense photochemicals. Seal integrity, customer handling, and recyclability has generated the need for a cap molded from high density polyethylene (HDPE) resin which can seal the bottle and be opened simply by inserting the bottle into processing apparatus. At the present time, each product forming part of such a combination is stored in a plastic flask closed by a liquid tight stopper. The photochemical manufacturing community currently utilizes various methods for sealing bottles filled with photographic development chemicals which includes, but is not limited to: 1) foam/cardboard seal insert inside the bottle cap; and 2) aluminum foil seal welded over the bottle neck opening and covered with a cap. A shortcoming of the aforementioned sealing methods is that they each present a propensity to leak that detracts or prevents recycling of the bottle without removing the cap and seal residue.

Another currently available practice for sealing a flask used in the photochemical manufacturing community includes a bottle cap with an integral bottleneck seal and segmented lid section. The cap provides a reliable fluid seal while the segmented lid is rupturable by blades available on existing photographic processing apparatus that tear or rupture the segmented portion of the cap. The aforementioned stopper design utilizes a tear channel or weakness with a rectangular cross-section to bisect half of the frangible lid.

While the above cap meets the bottle seal requirements and recycling requirements, it is generally known in the photochemical community that a rather significant shortcoming is the puncturability of the segmented lid. Skilled artisans will appreciate that the downward force (average puncture force of 30.12 lbs. or 134.5 Newtons) required to puncture the segmented lid is beyond the physical capabilities of the average person.

Therefore, a need persists in the art to remedy the aforementioned shortcomings by requiring lower puncture forces while maintaining an inexpensive emptying method, as well as complete recyclability of the flask and closure.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is, therefore, an object of the invention to provide a frangible closure for a container, such as a flask for photoprocessing chemicals, which is recyclable, prevents leaks, and opens easily.

It is another object of the invention to provide a frangible closure that collapses along a central weakness and partially along a radial weakness.

Yet another object of the invention is to provide a frangible closure having at least two hinge points which enables the closure sheet to bend inward towards an adjoining processing container.

It is a feature of the invention that a central weakness and a connecting radial weakness in the closure sheet of the frangible closure enables the closure to easily collapse inward toward the container to which it is adjoined.

The present invention is directed to overcoming one or more of the problems set forth above. Briefly summarized, according to one aspect of the present invention, a frangible closure, comprises a closure sheet having a central weakness formed substantially through a medial portion of the closure sheet. The central weakness has a thickness and a central portion of greater thickness than the thickness of the central weakness so as to resist shearing of the central weakness. A lateral skirt surrounds the closure sheet. Between the lateral skirt and the closure sheet is at least a partial radial weakness for cooperating with the central weakness and enabling the central weakness to fracture in response to an applied predetermined force.

The present invention has numerous advantages over current developments. First, the frangible closure of the current invention reduces the puncture forces to an acceptable level. The addition of a gate pad allows the tear channel to be molded through the center of the closure resulting in lower puncture forces while eliminating the possibility of shearing a hole through the top of the closure. The gate pad allows the frangible closure to be center gated eliminating weld lines in the cap that can crack under loads, allowing leakage of photographic chemicals through the cap.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above and other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent when taken in conjunction with the following description and drawings wherein identical reference numerals have been used, where possible, to designate identical features at are common to the figures, and wherein:

FIG. **1** is perspective view of the closure of the invention;

FIG. **2** is a section view taken along lines II—II of FIG. **3**;

FIG. **3** is isometric view of the inside of the first variant of the frangible closure according to the invention;

FIG. **4** is a section taken along lines IV—IV of FIG. **3**;

FIG. **5** is a plan view of the installation on which a single flask is depicted; and

FIG. **6** is a top view of the blade point that punctures the center of the closure sheet.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Turning now to the drawings, and particularly to FIGS. **1–4**, the present invention concerns a liquid-tight, removable, frangible closure **12** molded preferably from a recyclable high-density polyethylene (HDPE) material. According to FIG. **1**, frangible closure **12** has at least one closure sheet **14** fixed to a lateral skirt **16** enabling the closure **12** to be mounted (for example, by a screw), on the spout of a container or flask, described below. According to FIGS. **2–4**, frangible closure **12** has a closure sheet **14** having a central weakness **18** formed substantially through a medial portion **19** of the closure sheet **14**. Central weakness **18** has a thickness and a central portion **22** of greater thickness than the thickness of the central weakness **18**. It is advantageous for central portion **22** of greater thickness to have a thickness greater than the thickness of the central weakness **18** so as to resist shearing of the central weakness **18** due to gate shear in the molding process. In the preferred embodiment of the invention, central weakness **18** is an inverted V-shaped channel. The inverted V shaped channel propagates from the central portion **22** of the closure sheet **14** outward towards the radial weakness (described below). Moreover, the inverted V-shaped channel is preferably molded through the medial portion **19** of the underside of the frangible closure **12**. It allows for lower puncture forces (average puncture force of 24.27 lbs. or 108 Newtons) to collapse the closure sheet **14**, as described herein. The addition of the central portion **22** of greater thickness eliminates the possibility of shearing a hole through the closure sheet **14** during the injection molding process due to gate shear. Moreover, central portion **22** of greater thickness, in the preferred embodiment, is a gate pad molded into the closure sheet **14** having opposed, spaced apart, substantially equal thickness portions **24**.

Referring to FIGS. **3** and **4**, lateral skirt **16** surrounds the closure sheet **14**. The lateral skirt **16** and the closure sheet **14** have a radial weakness **28** at least partially therebetween which cooperates with the central weakness **18** and enables the central weakness **18** to fracture under an applied force. More particularly, radial weakness **28** is a channel comprising spatially separated hinge points **30** for enabling the central weakness **18** to collapse into the radial weakness **28**. More importantly, the hinge points **30** prevent the closure sheet **14** from separating from the lateral skirt **16** when the closure sheet **14** is under an applied pressure. Each of the preferably two hinge points **30** has a thickness greater than the thickness of the radial weakness **28**. Moreover, hinge points **30** are spatially separated preferably about 180 degrees apart. Further, hinge points **30** are molded into the top of the frangible closure **12** normal from the central weakness **18** allowing the punctured closure sheet **14** to fold away toward the container.

The central weakness **18** together with the radial weakness **25 28**, also referred to as frangible areas, allow the closure sheet **14** of the frangible closure **12** to tear under load across the medial portion **19**.

Depicted in FIGS. **2–4**, frangible closure **12** may include a plurality of threads **32** on the interior wall **34** of lateral skirt **16** for engaging corresponding threads in a container or flask to which it is connected, as described below. The threads **32** provide a means to reduce leaks from the frangible closure **12** and container when the two are tightly screwed together. Those skilled in the art, however, will appreciate that frangible closure **12** may be designed to snap securely onto the container without the necessity of threads **32** and cooperating threads in the container.

Referring to FIG. **1**, lateral skirt **16** may include a plurality of outer ribs **36** for facilitating twisting the frangible closure **12** away from the container body.

Turning now to FIGS. **5–6**, in another embodiment of the invention, a fluid transfer system **50** includes a first container **52** containing a fluid and second container **54** in fluid communications with the first container **52**. First container **52** has a body **56**, a neck portion **58** extending from the body **56** and terminating in an opening **60**. A frangible, removable and recyclable closure **62**, having all the features described hereinabove, is affixed to the opening **60** for closing the opening **60** and exposing the fluid therein to fluid communications with the second container **54** in a manner described above.

Referring to FIGS. **5–6**, second container **54** comprises means, such as perforation member **66**, for applying a force to the central weakness **18** (FIGS. **3–4**) thereby collapsing the central weakness **18** into the radial weakness **28**. This enables fluid flow from the first container **52** into the second container **54**.

Referring to FIG. **5**, in operations, the emptying of a first container **52** having the frangible closure **62** of the invention is effected by tipping over first container **52** onto a perforation member **66** disposed inside an emptying orifice (not shown) of second container **54**. The emptying is effected directly through the closure sheet **14** of the frangible closure **12** held in the closed position on the spout of the first container **52**. The central weakness **18** is punctured by the force of the perforation member **66** that causes a portion of the closure sheet **14** to collapse along the central weakness **18** inwardly towards the first container **52**. This puncturing action creates a flow path inside the first container **52** that enables the fluid to flow from the first container **52** into the second container **54**.

The invention has been described with reference to a preferred embodiment. It will, however, be appreciated that variations and modifications can be effected by a person of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the scope of the invention.

PARTS LIST

12 frangible closure
14 closure sheet
16 lateral skirt
18 central weakness of closure sheet **14**
19 medial portion of closure sheet
22 central portion of closure sheet **14**
24 opposed thickness portions
28 radial weakness
30 hinge points
32 threads
34 interior wall of lateral skirt **16**
36 outer ribs

50 fluid transfer system
52 first container
54 second container
56 body of first container **52**
58 neck portion of first container **52**
60 opening
62 alternative embodiment of recyclable closure
66 perforation member

What is claimed is:

1. A frangible closure, comprising:

a closure sheet having a central weakness formed substantially through a medial portion of said closure sheet, said central weakness having a thickness and a central portion of greater thickness than the thickness of said central weakness so as to resist shearing of said central weakness; and,

a lateral skirt surrounding said closure sheet, said lateral skirt and said closure sheet having at least a partial radial weakness therebetween for cooperating with said central weakness, said at least a partial radial weakness

defining a channel comprising spatially separated hinge points for enabling said central weakness to collapse into said at least a partial radial weakness and preventing said closure sheet from separating from said lateral skirt when said closure sheet is under an applied pressure, said hinge points being molded into a top portion of said closure and having a thickness greater than the thickness of said at least a partial radial weakness.

2. The closure recited in claim **1** wherein said central weakness has an inverted, substantially V-shape.

3. The closure recited in claim **1** wherein said central portion of greater thickness is a gate pad having opposed, spaced apart, substantially equal thickness portions.

4. The closure recited in claim **1** wherein said central weakness propagates along a line co-linear with said opposed, spaced apart substantially equal thickness portions.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,213,324 B1
DATED : April 10, 2001
INVENTOR(S) : Scott H. Schwallie et al.

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 6, claim 4,
Line 1, delete "claim 1" and insert -- claim 3 --.

Signed and Sealed this

Twenty-fifth Day of December, 2001

Attest:

JAMES E. ROGAN
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

Attesting Officer